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Exploring Sino-British transnational educational partnerships: exploring the operational relationships of faculty members and the implications for TNE partnership development



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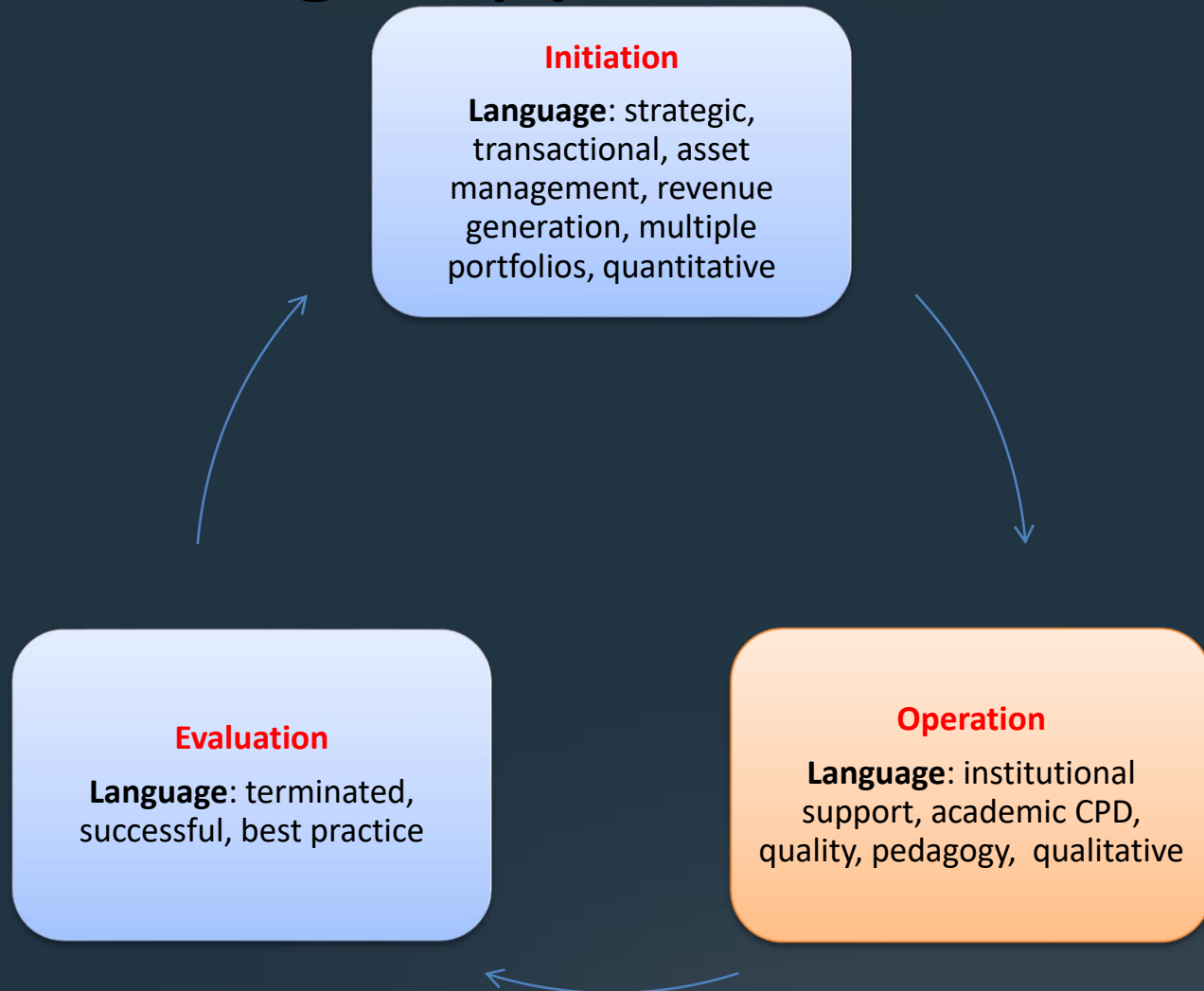


TNE Partnerships

- Approx. 457,170 overseas students study UK HE as part of collaborations between partner institutions (HESA, n.d).
- Numerous modes of cooperation with varying levels of formalisation exist: validation, franchise, articulation, 'joint' programmes, IBC, distance-learning etc.
- As alliances grow in complexity and involve wider sets of stakeholders, understanding how partners **interact and respond to each other arguably offers a new way in which to evaluate international partnership development.**



Analysing TNE Partnerships: The Stage Approach





Operationalizing TNE Partnerships

- **The operational phase:** a process, consisting of agents (faculty members) who generate, and participate in operational activities, in order to achieve outcomes that stimulate positive relational developments over time.
- Requires agents to work together to create optimal outputs that **meet or exceed partner expectations.**



Operational Activities & Relationships

- **Operational tasks require:** clear direction and communication, including purpose and instruction, access to resources, time to deliver and evaluate outcomes.
- This builds good levels of social capital between faculty members: trust, resource transfer, respect and commitment.
- However, operational activities effect the emotion, behaviour and attitudes of operational faculty members.



Research Questions

This research contributes to an understanding of TNE partnership development by asking:

1. What **underlying forces influence** faculty member activities and how do these effect operational relationships?
2. Is it possible for operational faculty members to influence the **expansion and transformation** of their TNE partnerships in order to improve them over time?
3. Is it possible to provide **insight into more effective ways** in which to construct TNE partnerships to improve operational interactions and encourage positive partnership development?



TNE 'Operational Phase' Conceptual Framework

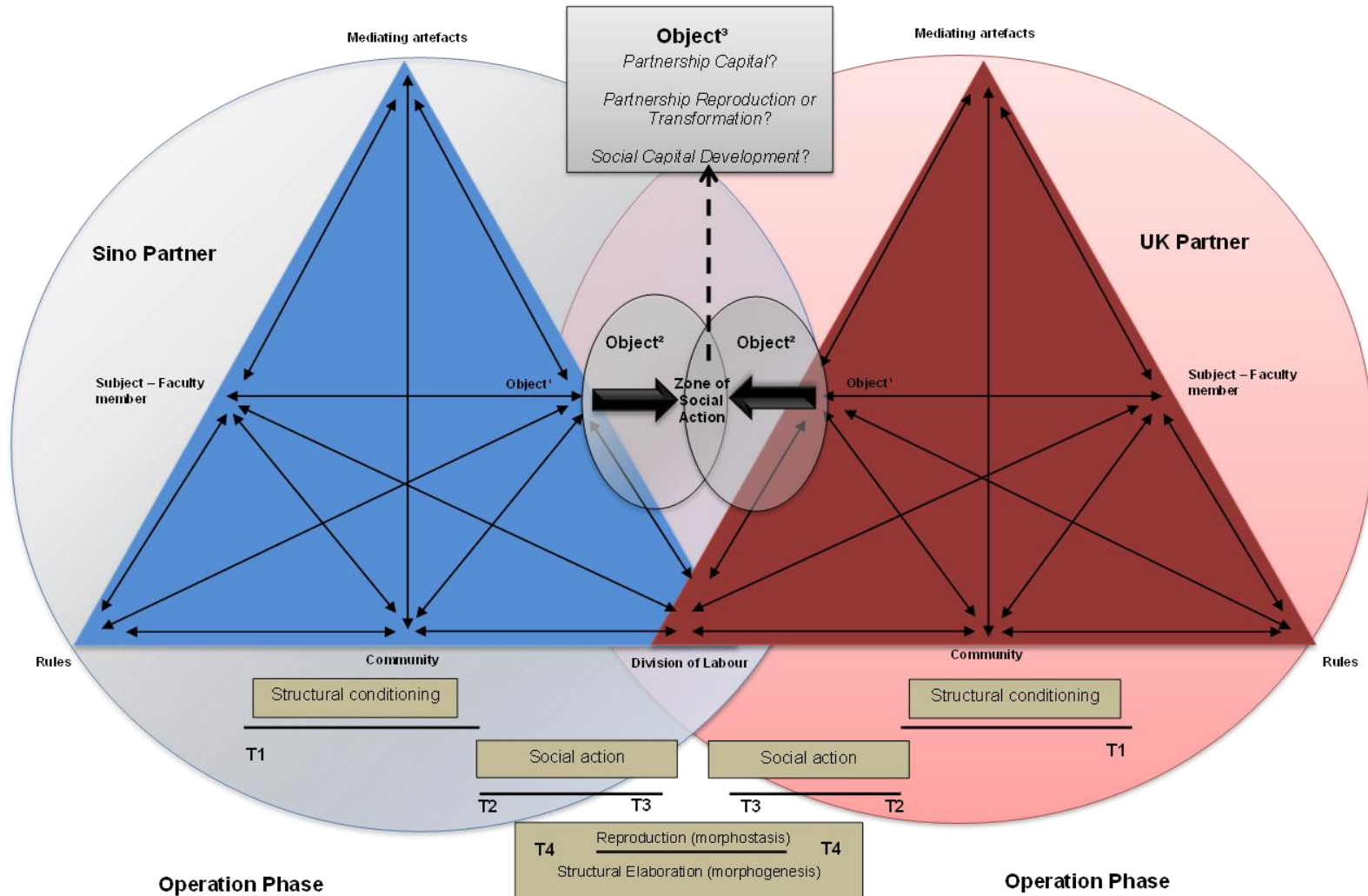


Figure 8: Operational level transnational partnership development: a fusion model (Adapted from Engeström, 2001, p. 13; Eddy, 2010, p. 50; Archer, 1995, p. 157; Wohlstetter et al., 2005, p. 420).



Research Sample

- A qualitative, multiple-case study design of 2 Sino-British TNE partnerships.
 - Partnership A
 - Business discipline
 - 6 MA and BA qualified faculty interviewed (3 UK, 3 China expats)
 - 6 year duration
 - UK HEI A, host institute Sino X
 - Partnership B
 - STEM discipline
 - 4 PhD qualified faculty interviewed (2 UK, 2 China expats)
 - 8 year duration
 - UK HEI B, host institute Sino X



Forces Underpinning TNE Partnerships

Time: *Partnership A & B*

“The time the UK asked us for this, it was January, and January here is the worst time ever...the coursework...exam time...it’s like “oh gosh” just like how really, to balance all this...we feel really exhausted...you know pressures...I’m just human, I cannot handle all this...” (*Hannah Sino, A*)

“Simple things like time zones, just the email times when you want an answer now, it doesn’t happen because they (UK) are in bed. Its too easy for them to forget about us over here...so far away. I represent the UK university and I make sure that is not forgotten...I speak to the relevant people...they trust me” (*Gary Sino, B*)



Forces Underpinning TNE Partnerships

Time

- Change *perceptions* of time:
 - Consider it as an integral intangible resource, required to build relationships.
 - Imposing insensitive regulations, high workloads, inadequate ICT, multiple stakeholder objectives, effects activities, time and its allocation.
 - Partnership infrastructure can manipulate *perceptions of time*.
 - “Create” time /speed up activity production and response times by considering **secondment** (B).
 - Provides host immediate access to awarding institution in terms of resources such as tacit knowledge and support.



Forces Underpinning TNE Partnerships

Legacy: *Partnership A & B*

“Well the mind-set I was taught under (person X) when we went in was “right we are in charge, this is our degree, our names are on it” we are the powerful ones...get control, show we are in charge. They (Sino X) were terrified, they were not prepped properly for what was coming, and as it’s progressed we have gone for more of this” (*Ann UK, A*)

“We have built a strong relationship with the UK, preparing lecture notes or assessments, the quality of our assessments- the feedback we get, helps build trust, doing the bread and butter stuff, hitting the right standards this helps in their eyes (UK), it sets us up as a genuine group of people doing a genuine job” (*Gary Sino, B*)



Forces Underpinning TNE Partnerships

Legacy

- Create a history of joint negotiation, problem solving and shared vision:
 - Previous experiences create memories and emotions that “live” in the partnership activity system, influencing engagement.
 - A history of positive social encounters between partners feeds back into the system setting the tone for present and future engagements.
 - A “proven track record” provides senior managers with the confidence to enable/ implement further partnership developments.



Forces Underpinning TNE Partnerships

Cultural Difference: *Partnership A & B*

“Completely different sets of standards, expectations...that’s where the variables come in because of the level of expectation that we have, we expect China to behave in a certain way and they don’t, China expect us as a leading institution to behave in a particular way and we don’t” (*Ann UK, A*).

“My colleague in China offered to mark coursework. We both get the student submissions so we both have an overview that’s a way of having some transparency and consistency. It helped me a lot, sometimes you have to give up some control and say “I trust that you have good capabilities”, it’s about reaching out and I enjoy their input” (*Steve UK, B*).



Forces Underpinning TNE Partnerships

Cultural Difference

- Create an ethnorelative rather than ethnocentric environment:
 - Different or “perceived hidden” agendas may create assumptions, tensions and conflicts across operational teams, effecting communication: **Assessment and Feedback.**
 - Participating HEIs need to embed cross-cultural training, knowledge exchanges, leadership skills of faculty members-encourage respect, integration and awareness.
 - Involve faculty members in strategic discussions, understand their role, how their work is beneficial.
 - Use contact activities like FIFO, peer observations, CPD trips to develop empathy and understandings



Key Partnership Features

- Underpinning mechanisms influence:
 1. **Communication** between faculty members.
 2. **Emotional states** (feelings of trust, commitment, respect, empathy, apathy, anxiety, hopelessness).
 3. **Resource transfer** (blocking, disabling or enabling access to intangible and tangible resources and the ability to use them in the pursuit of purposive action).
- Must ensure infrastructure has a positive impact on time, legacy and cultural difference



The 'Ideal' Operational TNE Model

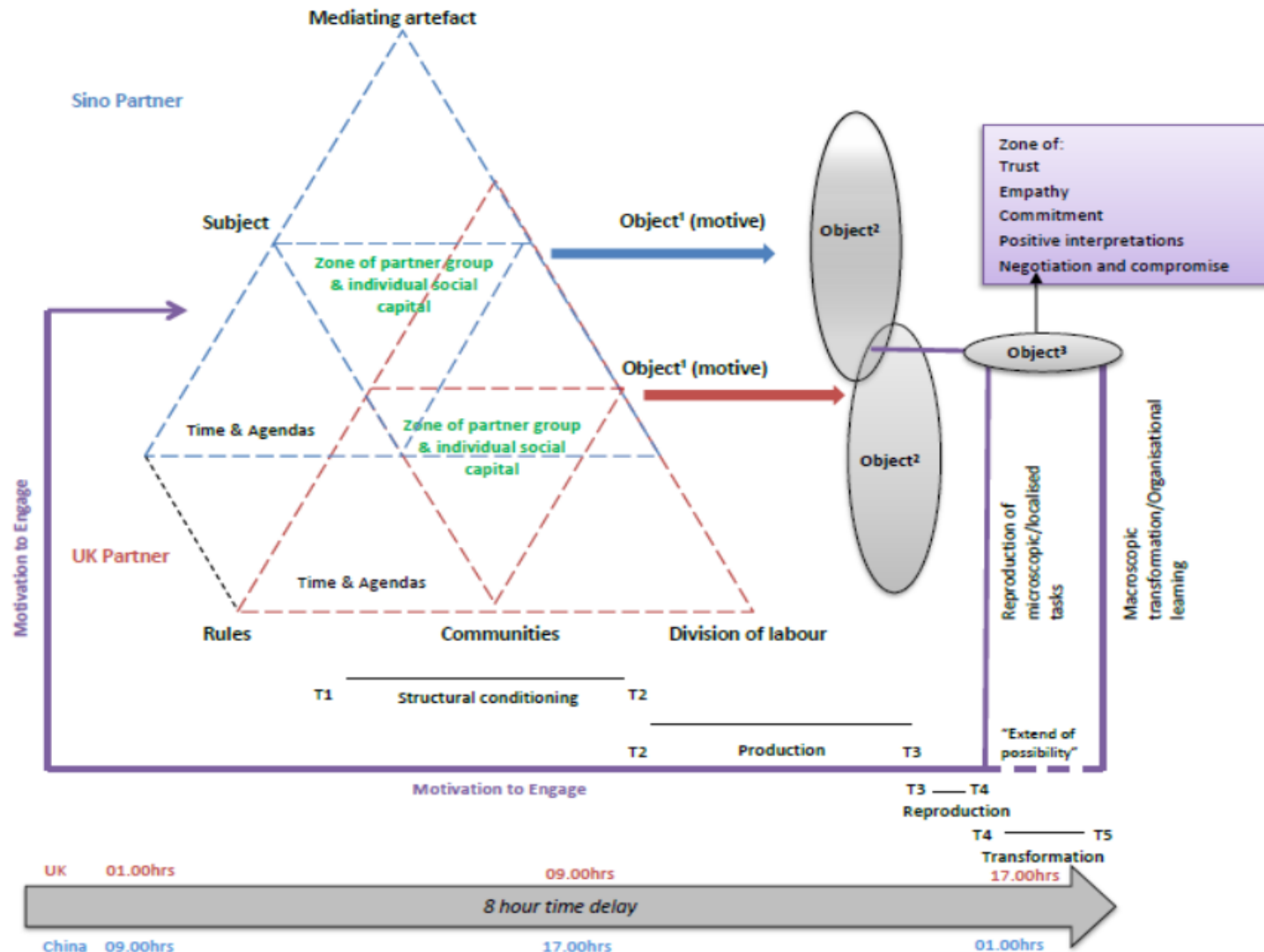
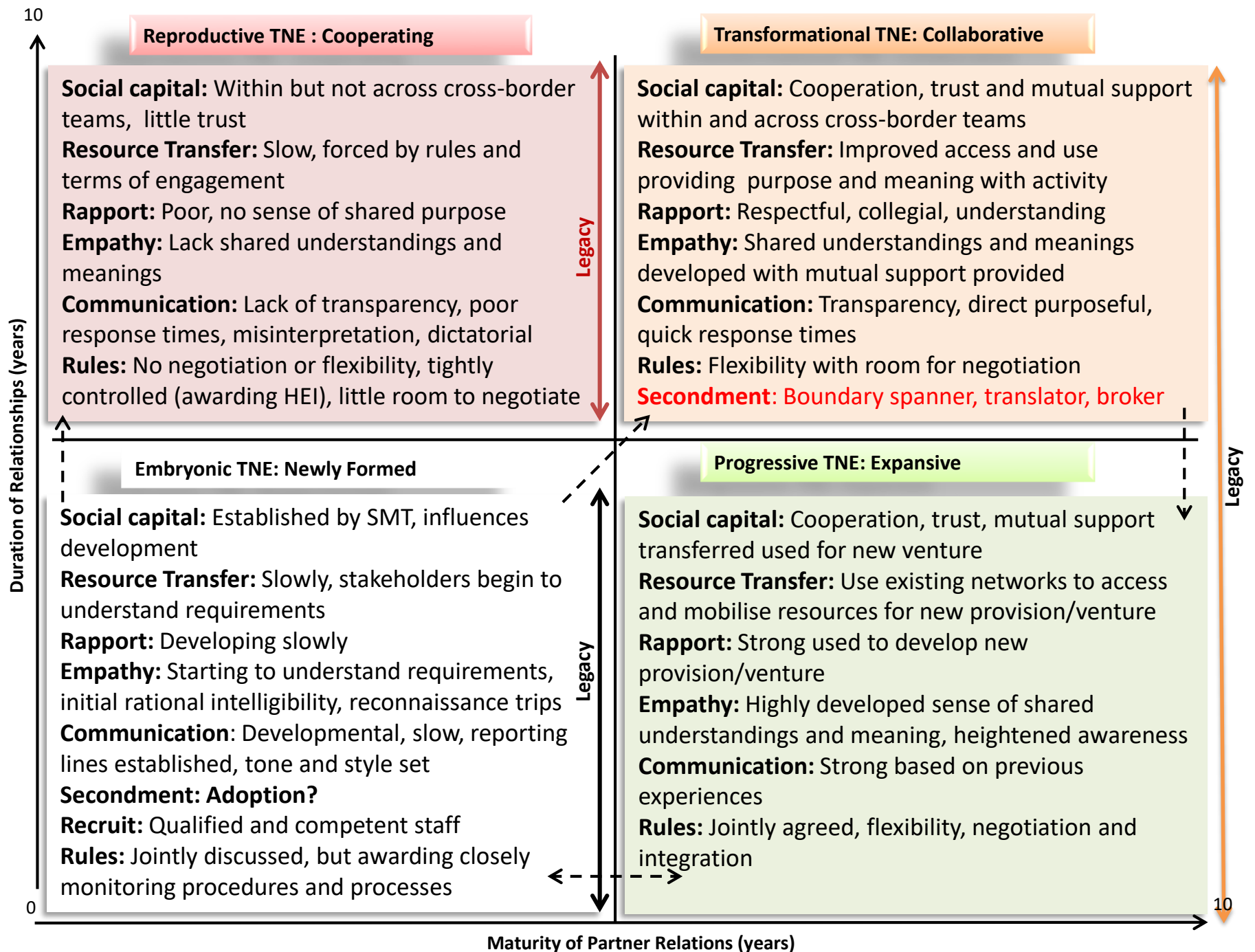


Figure 17: A model of TNE partnership B



Thank you Questions?

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